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The Historical and Scientific Society
of Manitoba.

WORTHIES OF OLD RED RIVER

— BY —

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A LIFE MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY.

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Worthies^{of} —

Old Red River

At the annual meeting of the Historical society held Tuesday evening, the 11th February, 1896, in the city council chamber, the Rev. Dr. Bryce, a life member of the society, read the following interesting paper:

A lively writer who visited the Selkirk colony nearly forty years ago, speaks of the Red River settlement as "This bit of ruder European life, thrown haphazard into the wilderness." Though consisting of but a handful of people, the old settlement had many unique features. Its isolation, its strong individuality, and its peculiarity of organization make some of its features as worthy of notice as those of Drumtochty or the village of Thrums.

The settlement was made up of three principal elements: First, there were the descendants of the early French traders and voyageurs, who had married the Indian women of the country, and left behind them the the French halfbreeds, or as they were often called the Metis, or at other times the Bois-brûlés. These people lived chiefly up the Red river from the mouth of the Assiniboine in the parishes of St. Boniface, St. Vital, St. Norbert and Ste. Agathe, in St. Charles, St. François Xavier, and Baie St. Paul on the Assiniboine, and at two outlying settlements one on the Seine at Pointe de Chene, and the other at St. Laurent on Lake Manitoba. Though somewhat severely spoken of by Ross in his work on the Red river, the French halfbreeds are kind and obliging to those who treat them as friends,

and though deprived of the benefits of education are a chivalrous and well mannered people.

Second, among the elements of Red river people are the descendants of the older employes of the Hudson's Bay company, many of them from the Orkney Islands, who also on the mother's side were related to Indians of the country. These were known as the English, i. e. English-speaking halfbreeds. The chief English halfbreed settlements were on the Red river in the parishes of St. Paul, St. Andrews, and St. Clements, with St. James, Headingley, Poplar Point, and Portage la Prairie on the Assiniboine. The English half-breed was more docile than the French, less of a hunter and more of a worker, and hospitable to a fault.

Last of the elements of the Red River people were the Selkirk settlers, and their descendants, who lived north of the present site of the city of Winnipeg, in the parish of Kildonan, or in the parish of St. John's, which included much of the site of the present city of Winnipeg. The Kildonan people were almost entirely of Highland origin, and had features of language and character and a parish life, quite distinctive in this mixture of races.

This tripartite community varied much in religion, manners and customs. The French halfbreeds were Roman Catholics, the English halfbreeds belonged chiefly to the Church of England, and the Selkirk settlers were largely Presbyterians.

As to numbers the census of 1849 given by Ross states that there were in all 5,391 of a population. The population of the settlement in 1870, in the year when Manitoba was formed, has usually been stated at about 12,000, of whom 5,000 were French halfbreeds, 5,000 English halfbreeds and 2,000 whites. It should be stated that the whites were not all confined to Kildonan and St. John's but were to some extent scattered through the other parishes. The figures given by Hargrave in his "Red River" somewhat differ from these.

Here, however, isolated and composite, was a small community, governed by a council nominated by the Hudson's Bay company, which had grown up from being a few hundred in 1817 when Lord Selkirk visited the colony to the figures named in 1869, the last year in which the Hudson's Bay company held sway in the country.

Here religion and education had early come and with their softening and elevating influences had reduced the isolated dwellers of the Selkirk settlement, the wild hunters of the plains, and the wandering trippers of the prairies into a community having many striking characteristics.

In this community rose to the position of leaders a number of men of very different powers and various influence. We shall endeavor this evening to sketch the lives and work of a few of them; and our choice of subjects will be from the different elements of the population.

JOHN PRITCHARD.

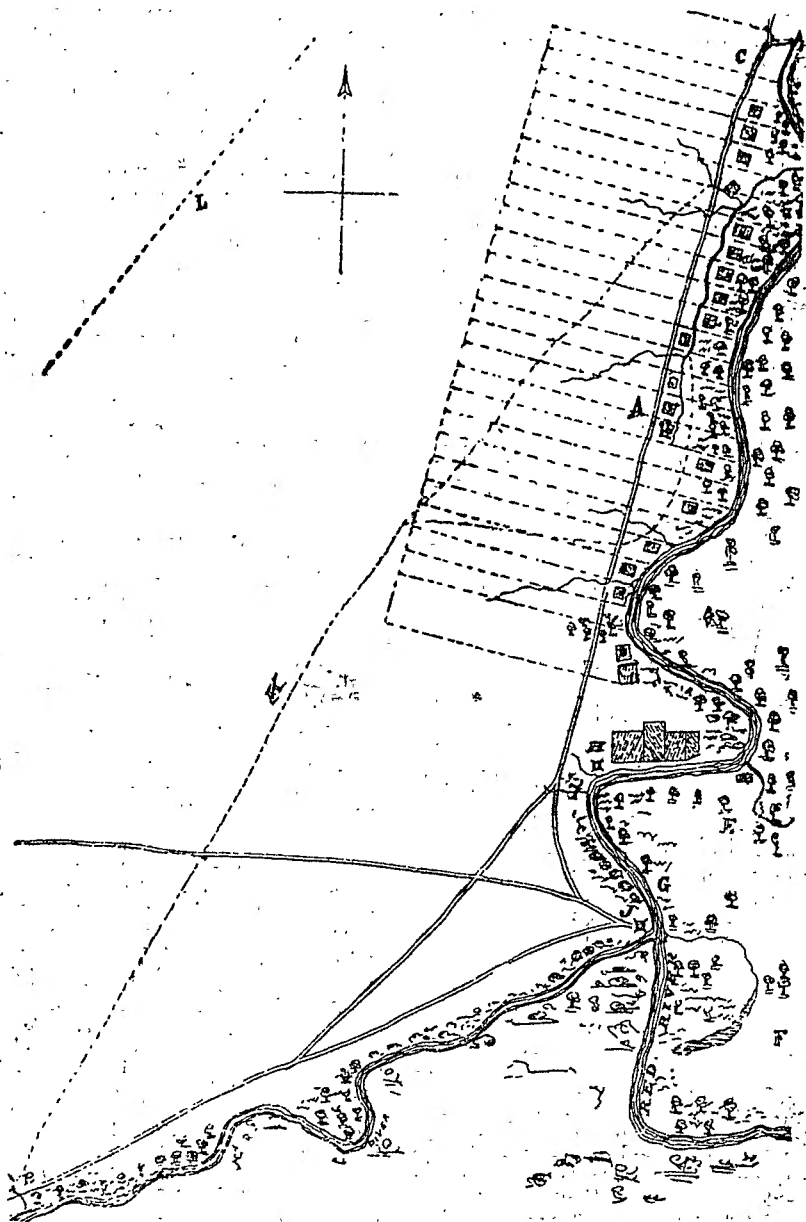
Fur Trader and Agent.

The name of John Pritchard carries us back in the Red River to the beginning of this century—to a time even before the coming of the Selkirk Colony. His descendants to the fourth generation are still found in Manitoba, and are well known. He was born in 1777 in a small village near the town of Shrewsbury, in Shropshire, England, and received his education in the famous grammar school of the town named. Early in this century he emigrated to Montreal, almost certainly before 1804. At that time the ferment among the fur traders was great. The old Northwest company of Montreal had split into sections, and to the new company or X Y company young Pritchard was attached. We first hear of him at the mouth of the Souris river in 1805, and shortly after in charge of one of

the forts at that point where the Souris empties into the Assiniboine. One of his letters is extant giving an account of his being lost without companion or food on the prairie between the Pipestone and the Souris. For forty days he survived, living on the roots of the prairie turnips, a prairie chicken, and now and then a frog. He at last found himself at Whitewater lake, in the Deloraine district, and by the help of an Indian reached Fort Riviere la Souris, not having, as he says himself, "the appearance of an inhabitant of this world."

Probably Pritchard never took kindly to the combined Northwest company, for we find him a few years after as one of the garrison occupying Fort Douglas, although he represents himself as being a settler on the Red River. Elsewhere a full account has been given of the causes of the Red River troubles from 1814 to 1817. The Northwest company of Montreal had occupied the Northwest before the Hudson's Bay company left the Bay and penetrated the interior. From the year 1774 when the Hudson's Bay company erected Fort Cumberland on the Saskatchewan almost within hailing distance of the Nor'-Wester fort the fiercest rivalry continued. For nearly forty years this fur trading contest lasted until matters assumed a new form when Lord Selkirk, determined to establish his colony, under Hudson's Bay company auspices on the banks of Red River.

Lord Selkirk's first settlers arrived, by way of Hudson Bay, at the Red River in 1812, and took up holdings on the Red River, near the site of the present city of Winnipeg. Several parties arrived in the years succeeding by the same route, until the Selkirk settlement in 1814 numbered about two hundred souls. In that year a "jauntily-dressed" officer of the Nor'-west company, named Duncan Cameron, succeeded in inducing about one hundred and fifty of the settlers to desert the Red River and take up their abode in the western part of Upper Canada. Governor Macdonell had erected buildings within what are now the limits of the city of Winnipeg; but the Nor'-westers resisted his authority, and even took the governor prisoner; and their chiefs, one of whom was Cuthbert Grant, on June 25th, 1815, issued the mandate: "All settlers to retire immediately from the River, and no appearance of a colony to remain." In that year, however, another party of Highland colonists



RED RIVER SETTLEMENT.

Fac-simile of section of Map (1818).

A—Seven Oaks, where Semples fell.
 B—Creek where Metis left Assiniboine.
 C—Frog Plain (since Kildonan church).
 E to F—De Meuron Settlers on Seine.
 G—Half-breeds (St. Boniface of today),

H—Fort Douglas (1815).
 I—Colony Gardens.
 J—Fort Gibraltar (N. W. Co.)
 K—Road followed by Metis.
 L—Dry Cart trail west of Settlers' lots.

arrived from Britain, making the number up again to about one hundred and fifty. The deserted homesteads were again occupied. The colonists' buildings were erected in a more substantial form, a barricade was built around them, and reprisals were even made upon the Nor'-wester establishment, Fort Gibraltar, which stood at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. An officer, Robt. Sempie, had been sent out by Lord Selkirk as governor, and he took up his abode in Fort Douglas (1816). The Nor'-westers now determined to make a great effort, and these events led to the battle of "Seven Oaks," in which the governor and his attendants were killed.

"The Bois-Brules, as the French half-breeds were commonly called, were admirably adapted for the purposes of the Nor'-westers, and indeed had a passionate attachment to the company. The company, recognizing the power it gave them with the Indians to have as agents those having Indian blood encouraging the idea of an autonomy—a nationality among themselves.

In 1816 the Nor'-westers determined to attack the settlement. For several months their plans were slowly but surely matured. From Qu'Appelle, Brandon House and Portage la Prairie the company received reinforcements. From the Portage the main body of Bois-brules, mounted on horses and armed with guns, pistols, lances and bows and arrows pushed on to attack the settlement. On arriving at the creek east of Silver Heights, the party turned across the prairie, and by the line marked on the map moved toward Kildonan.

John Pritchard, who was in Fort Douglas, which was situated near the foot of George street in this city, gives a clear account of the affair:

"On the afternoon of the 19th of June, 1816, a man in the watch-house called out that the half-breeds were coming. The governor, some other gentlemen and myself looked through spy-glasses, and I distinctly saw some armed people on horseback passing along the plains. A man then called out: 'They (meaning the half-breeds) are making for the settlers, on which the governor said: We must go out and meet those people; let twenty men follow me.' We proceeded along the old road leading down the settlement. As we were going along we

met many of the settlers running to the fort crying. 'The half-breeds! the half-breeds!' When we were advanced about three-quarters of a mile along the settlement we saw some people on horseback behind a point of woods. On our nearer approach the party seemed to be more numerous, on which the governor made a halt and sent for a field-piece, which delaying to arrive, he ordered us to advance. We had not proceeded far before the half-breeds with their faces painted in the most hideous manner, and in the dresses of Indian warriors, came forward and surrounded us in the form of a half moon. We then extended our line and moved more into the open plain, and as they advanced we retreated a few steps backward and then saw a Canadian named Boucher ride up to us waving his hand and calling out, "What do you want?" The governor replied, "What do you want?" To which Boucher answered, "We want our fort." The governor said, "Go to your fort." They were by this time near each other, and consequently spoke too low for me to hear. Being at some little distance to the right of the governor, I saw him take hold of Boucher's gun, and almost immediately a general discharge of firearms took place, but whether it began on our side or that of the enemy, it was impossible to distinguish. My attention was then directed to my personal defence. In a few minutes almost all our people were either killed or wounded.

Captain Rogers, having fallen, rose up and came towards me, when, not seeing one of our party who was not either killed or disabled, I called out to him, 'For God's sake give yourself up!' He ran towards the enemy for that purpose, myself following him. He raised up his hands and, and in English and broken French, called for mercy. A half-breed (son of Col. Wm. McKay) shot him through the head, and another cut open his belly with a knife with the most horrid imprecations. Fortunately for me, a Canadian, named Lavigne, joining his entreaties to mine, saved me (though with the greatest difficulty) from sharing the fate of my friend at that moment. After this I was reserved from death, in the most providential manner, no less than six different times on my way to and at Frog Plain, the headquarters of these cruel murderers. With the exception of myself, no quarter was given to any of us. The knife, axe or ball, put a period to the existence of the



SEVEN OAKS MONUMENT

wounded; and on the bodies of the dead were practised all those barbarities which characterize the inhuman heart of the savage. The amiable and mild Mr. Semple, lying on his side (his thigh having been broken) and supporting his head upon his hand, addressed the commander of our enemies, by inquiring if he was Mr. Grant; and being answered in the affirmative, 'I am not mortally wounded,' said Mr. Semple; 'and if you get me conveyed to the fort, I think I should live.' Grant promised he would do so, and immediately left him in the care of a Canadian, who afterwards told that an Indian of their party had shot Mr. Semple in the breast. I entreated Grant to procure me the watch, or even the seals, of Mr. Semple, for the purpose of transmitting them to his friends, but I did not succeed. Our force amounted to 28 persons, of whom 21 were killed and one wounded."

The monument of Seven Oaks commemorates the unfortunate victims of the fray.

John Pritchard lived to see Fort Douglas in the following year recaptured from the Bois-Brûlés. He entered Lord Selkirk's service, and as his agent went over to London. To him was left the duty of obtaining a minister for the Kildonan settlers. Pritchard married among the people of Kildonan, and lived not far from the Kildonan church on the other side of the river. A number of his letters have been printed which show that he took a lively interest in the affairs of the settlement, especially in its religious concerns. It is not then remarkable that among his descendants there should be no less than seven clergymen of the Church of England. It is interesting to know that the Hudson Bay company voted him about 1833 an annuity of £25 in consideration of valuable services rendered by him to education, and especially in the establishment of Sunday schools and day schools. This man whose life was a chronicle of the history of the settlement passed away in 1856 and was buried in St. John's churchyard.

PIERRE FALCON, The Rhymester.

Among the wild rout of Nor'-Westers at the skirmish of Seven Oaks was a French half-breed, whose father was a French Canadian, engaged in the fur trade, and his mother an Indian woman from the Missouri country. The young combatant had been born in 1793, at Elbow Fort, in the Swan River district. Taken as a child to

Canada, young Pierre lived for a time at Laprairie, and at the age of 15 returned with his father to Red River, and with him engaged in the service of the Northwest Fur company. What part Falcon took in the affair at Seven Oaks we are not told, except that he behaved bravely, and saw Governor Semple killed.

Pierre Falcon was, however, the bard or poet of his people. This characteristic of Falcon is quite remarkable considered in connection with the time and circumstances. That a man who was unable to read or write should have been able to describe the striking events of his time in verse is certainly a notable thing. He never tired singing in different times and metres the valor of the Bois-brûlés at "Seven Oaks."

"Voulez-vous écouter chanter
Une chanson de vérité
Le dix neuf Juin, la bande des Bois-
brûlés
Sont arrivés comme des braves guer-
riers."

Then with French gaiety and verse he gives an account of the attack on the Orkney men, as he calls them, recites the governor's action, and his death. Falcon finishes up the chanson with a wild hurrah of triumph:

"Les Bois-brûlés jetaient des cris de
joie."

The lively spirit of the rhymester broke out in songs upon all the principal events which agitated the people of the settlement. Joseph Tasse, to whom we are chiefly indebted in this sketch, said of him, "All his compositions are not of the same interest, but they are sung by our voyageurs to the measured stroke of the oar, on the most distant rivers and lakes of the Northwest. The echoes of the Assiniboine, the Mackenzie and Hudson Bay will long repeat them."

The excitable, patriotic spirit of the rhymester never left him. At the time of the Riel rebellion (1869-70) Falcon was still alive, and though between seventy and eighty years of age, he wished to march off with his gun to the fray, declaring that "while the enemy would be occupied in killing him his friends would be able to give hard and well-directed blows to them."

For about half a century he lived on the White Horse Plains, twenty miles or more up the Assiniboine from Winnipeg, and became an influential man in the neighborhood. His mercurial disposition seems to have become more settled than in his fiery youth, for though unlettered, he was made a justice of the peace.

His verse making was, of course, of a very simple and unfinished kind. One of his constant fashions was to end it up with a declaration that it was made by Falcon, the singer of his people.

"Qui en a fait la chanson ?

Un poete de Canton;

Au bout de la chanson

Nous vous le nommeros.

Un jour etant a table

A boire et a chanter

A chanter tout au long

La nouvelle chanson.

Amis, buvons, trinquons

Saluons la chanson

De Pierriche Falcon

Ce faiseur de chansons."

the last line being often varied to

"Pierre Falcon, le bon garçon."

ADAM THOM,

Judge and Philosopher.

In the year after the flight of "Seven Oaks" and the sacking of Fort Douglas, Lord Selkirk's men re-captured the fort. His lordship personally set things to rights in his colony, and the two rival fur companies united four years afterwards. For fourteen years after the union of the fur companies the affairs of the Red River settlement were still administered by Lord Selkirk's heirs. In 1835 the Hudson's Bay company bought out the rights of the private owners and established a council and company government in the settlement. In the course of a few years the need of better courts was felt, and in 1839 the subject of this sketch, familiarly known as "Judge Thom," came to Red River. He was a native of Aberdeen, born in 1802, educated at King's college in his native town, and had for a number of years been a political writer, a lawyer, and an assistant on Lord Durham's brilliant staff of young men in Canada.

Judge Thom's arrival in Red River, as the special choice of Governor Simpson, at once gave him a position and standing of great importance. He became a most influential man in the Red River Settlement. He had a marvellous gift of language, and by many in the settlement was looked up to as an oracle. Of warm and attractive manner he was soon a favorite of the people, and his ardent temperament led him to undertake many kind services for the settlers.

As has been said, "When the Bishopric of Rupert's Land was founded, he became the registrar; when the Kildonan church wanted a deed he drew it up and made it so firm in its provisions that when changes were necessary a few years ago in the tenure,

they were very difficult to make. Though the agent of the Hudson Bay Company, and therefore bound to carry out the policy of the company, as to not encouraging the entrance of too many religious bodies on Red River he is said to have had a hand at the same time in framing the petitions forwarded to London by the Presbyterians of Kildonan. Rev. John Ryerson, on his visit to Red River in 1854, tells of his going down to Kildonan to hear a lecture from Judge Thom "On the State and Progress of the Red River Settlement," and the hearer says that the subject was treated "with great elegance, beauty and ability."



ADAM THOM

The circumstances of the times were, however, trying for the new judge. The relation of the settlers on the Red River to the Hudson Bay Company had become very unsatisfactory. The company, by their charter, no doubt, had a monopoly of the fur trade. But the mass of the people being hunters, and finding it difficult otherwise to gain a living, had recognized this—and indeed the company had not enforced this claim. For some reason—according to some, on Judge Thom's advice—it was decided to enforce the right of the company. Accordingly, in 1844, Governor Christie issued two proclamations placing great restrictions on the settlers. These were tyrannical and severe enactments. Cases are cited in which set-

tiers, traders, and even missionaries were caused much inconvenience and loss by these stringent regulations. The governor and legal adviser, Judge Thom, naturally received the greater part of popular disapproval. The French halfbreeds took the lead in the agitation against the company. A strange story is related as to the way in which the English halfbreeds who had hitherto supported the claim of the company, came to throw in their lot with their French fellow-countrymen. A company officer had left his two daughters at Fort Garry to be educated. One of them was the object of the affection of a young Scotch halfbreed, and at the same time of a young Highlander. The young lady is said to have preferred the Metis, but the fond parent favored the young Highlander. The Scotchman, fortified by the father's approval, proceeded to upbraid the Metis for his temerity in aspiring to the hand of one so high in society as the lady. As love ruined Troy so it is said this affair joined French and English half-breeds in a union to defend the country.

During the five years after the publication of the proclamation a constant agitation was going on among the French. This was sedulously cultivated by one or two active leaders.

When popular feeling had been thoroughly roused it happened that in 1849 Guillaume Sayer, a French halfbreed trader, bought goods intending to go on a trading expedition to Lake Manitoba. The authorities determined to arrest Sayer and three of his associates. This was done, but Sayer only was kept in prison.

As the day of trial drew near the excitement grew intense. Governor Caldwell was known to be inflexible. Judge Thom, it was remembered, had written the famous "Anti-Gallic letters," in Montreal; he was, moreover, said to be the director of the policy of restriction, and a strong company man. The day of trial had been fixed for Ascension day, May 17th, and this was taken as a religious affront by the French. The court was to meet in the morning. On the day of the trial hundreds of French Metis, armed, came from all the settlements to St. Boniface church, and leaving their guns at the door of the church, entered for service. At the close they gathered together and were addressed in a fiery oration by their chief leader. Crossing by way of Point Douglas, the Metis surrounded the unguarded court house at Fort Garry. The governor and judge arrived and took their seats at 11 o'clock. A

curious scene then ensued, the magistrates protesting against the violence, a Metis in loud tones declaring that they would give the tribunal one hour and if justice were not done then they would do it themselves. An altercation then took place between Judge Thom and this leader, and the latter cried: "Et je declare que des ce moment Sayer est libre——" The shouts of the Metis drowned all opposition and Sayer and his fellow prisoners betook themselves to freedom, while the departing Metis cried out: "Le commerce est libre! le commerce est libre! vive la liberte." This crisis was a serious one. Judge Thom, at the suggestion of Governor Simpson did not take his place on the bench for a year though he still held his position and his emoluments. It was the end of the attempt of the company to enforce its distasteful monopoly.

Fifteen years of service in the remote and isolated settlement of Red River had enabled the recorder to accumulate a handsome competence. He accordingly resigned, and returning by way of York Factory sailed from that port in the company's ship "The Prince of Wales" on September 20th, 1854, with his wife and two children. In the second year after his return Judge Thom received the degree of LL. D. from his own university at Aberdeen in recognition of his attainments. He appears to have lived at Edinburgh and Torquay in what might seem to be his declining years, but removed to London in 1870 and took up his abode in his well known residence, 49 Torrington Square, a score of years longer. The family of his departed friend were a constant care to him. For them he always showed a passionate regard. A troublesome lawsuit with a leading banking house in London for misuse of his funds, worried him for years and ended in his losing the case.

Judge Thom's attainments were not however, all of a legal character. The Bishop of Montreal, on his visit to Fort Garry in 1844, mentions that at that time Recorder Thom "was deeply engaged latterly in Biblical studies." In 1847 he completed for publication his work on the typical character of what he calls "Abraham's 430 years." An active mind like that of Judge Thom must have something on which to work. In not having enough to fill up his time and utilize his energies, he must have some abstruse line of study. His mind seemed to have a bent towards mathematics, and his inclination and probably early

training led him to a minute study of the Bible, even in the original tongues. As showing his bent toward figures, the writer remembers Judge Thom saying that he never got into a London omnibus—many of whose figures run up into the thousands—without resolving the number into its factors, and combining them in every possible manner. Nothing delighted him so much as to get an appreciative listener and to refer for an hour at a time to the marvellous events of history and to show that they were not isolated, but were part of a great system of development.

His reverence and his mathematical bias at last settled on an idea which completely mastered him and made him in his later years a perfect arithmetical enthusiast. There is lying before the society his large octavo work of 300 pages printed by Remington & Co., London, and which contains his elaborate theory. This work has his essay, which he calls "Emmanuel," in a "pentaglot miniature," i.e., in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish.

An investigation of the work shows that his idea is that 33 and 34, which he in some way regards as the alternative numbers representing the length of our Saviour's life on earth, are normal units of all the great events of history. Of course, though he so thoroughly believed in his theory and in its very great value, yet it may easily be seen that it is only a series of arbitrary groupings and fanciful identifications. The wonder is that a mind of such strength could have wasted itself, on a path so fruitless and so extravagant.

THE ELDER RIEL, The Fiery Leader.

The moving spirit in these troubles of 1849 was the elder Riel, or as he is better known among the French "Louis Riel, pere." He was as famous in the events of his generation as his son afterwards was in those of our time. Old Louis Riel was born at Isle a la Crosse in the far Northwest, on the 7th of June, 1817. His father was a French Canadian and his mother a French half-breed. At the age of five years he was taken to Lower Canada, where he remained till his twenty-first year, learning in the meantime the trade of a wool-carder. After a short service in the Hudson's Bay company, the young tradesman determined to enter the church and spent two years with the Oblate brotherhood. Unsettled in mind the young novice took to the plains as a

hunter and did not stop short of "going to the sea," as making the trip to Hudson's Bay was called.

In the year 1843 Riel married one of the family of Lagimodiere, a woman of pure French Canadian blood though born on the Red River. Thwarted for a time in his ambition of establishing a woolen mill, he engaged in farming on the banks of the Seine river. His restless mind could not be satisfied until he had begun a mill for carding wool a few miles east of St. Boniface, on a tributary of the Seine. This mill did good work for the people of Red River, and their admiration was continually expressed for its originator, who was sometimes known as the "Miller of the Seine."

We have already spoken of the troubles of 1849. Riel was the very man for such a matter. Excitable and full of imagination, he saw repeated in the action of the company the tyrannies of old France before the Revolution, and of Lower Canada in the period of the rebellion of 1837. The hardships of the trader and missionary under the restriction of not being able to trade a single muskrat skin to supply their wants afforded him an un-failing text. Joseph Tasse, to whom again we are indebted for much information, says of this tribune of the people: "For a long time the French halfbreeds saw in Riel a man of ingenious mind, of energy, and of eloquence. Though poorly educated he had the gift of communicating his sentiments very powerfully to his audience. His words flowed with the abundance and brightness of a clear spring, when they did not run like a torrent. Louis Riel had all the gifts of a popular orator and the French halfbreeds greeted with loud applause his burning words."

These are words of high commendation. We can now see the meaning of the strange scene already described in the rescue of Sayer in the troublous times of 1849. To those having our British ideas it seems a great crime to interfere with the interests of justice and to resist to violence in the very presence of the august forms of law. At this time as in the earlier day of the 'Seven Oaks' affair, and afterwards in the two rebellions of the younger Riel, the Metis of the plains, who called themselves the "gens libres," must be declared to have had loose and irresponsible notions as to the claims of law. Riel continued to be full of projects for the manufacture of wooleens in the Northwest, and even had the sympathy of Governor Simpson, but with all his inventiveness and energy there was a lack of

business ability and foresight in the bustling "millier of the Seine." He died in 1864, the idol of the French halfbreeds of Red River.

ALEXANDER ROSS,

Sheriff and Author.

To no one are we more indebted than to Sheriff Ross for an interesting account of the history of the Red River settlement. He has been charged with being partial, but this charge has been made by interested parties. He was a man of decided character and much energy and in every way worthy of being remembered. He was born in the Highlands of Scotland in the year 1781. At the beginning of this cen-



ALEXANDER ROSS

tury the "Highland clearances" made it difficult to gain a living in the north of Scotland. A regiment of Highlanders had been recruited from those dispossessed of their holdings, and this was known as the Glengarry fencibles. After taking part against the rebels in Ireland, the regiment was disbanded in 1802, and in that or the next year emigrated to Canada and settled in the Glengarry district. With the disbanded soldiers came also a number of colonists from the Highland districts of Glenelg and Kintail and elsewhere.

Among these was Alexander Ross, a youth of twenty-one. For a number of years young Ross taught school in

the new settlements of Glengarry in Ontario, and in 1810 entered the Astor Fur company, went in the pioneer ship, the Temquin, to the Pacific coast and helped to found Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia river. On the purchase of Astor's fort by the Northwesters, Ross entered the Northwest company and was placed in charge of Okanagan, a fort in the Rocky Mountains. Here he married the daughter of the chief, and old residents of Winnipeg will remember Granny Ross as we used to call her, who died some twelve years ago. Trader Ross was for a time in charge of the post at Kamloops, but in 1825 he was ordered by Governor Simpson to Red River the object being to make him a school teacher in the settlement.

Alexander Ross settled down on what is now the site of the city of Winnipeg, and his house, "Colony Gardens," was well known to all old residents. He was an ardent partisan of Company interests, and acted for some time as sheriff of the colony. His large family grew up to take an important part in the social life of the settlement, and one of his sons, James, became a graduate of Toronto university, and was for a time one of the editors of the Toronto Globe. One of his daughters married the late Dr. Black, and another, who is the only survivor of the sheriff's children, became the wife of Rev. Geo. Flett, the veteran Indian missionary of the Presbyterian church.

Sheriff Ross, with the tenacity of his race, never rested until he saw on the banks of the Red river a minister of his own faith. As he tells the story in his book on Red River, innumerable difficulties met him and the Kildonan people in accomplishing their hearts' desire. He lived to see the fulfilment of his hopes in the arrival of Rev. John Black in this country in 1851. Mr. Ross became an elder and a leading man in the Kildonan church.

In literature also Alexander Ross gained no little reputation. He wrote a number of books on the country, viz., "Red River Settlement," "The Fur Traders of the Far West," "Adventures on the Oregon and Columbia" and it is said an essay on "Agriculture." As a writer he is graphic and in the main reliable. Perhaps he allowed his opinions to influence him too much in his description of some of the uproar and struggles of the Red River people. His own and his family's names are abundantly commemorated.



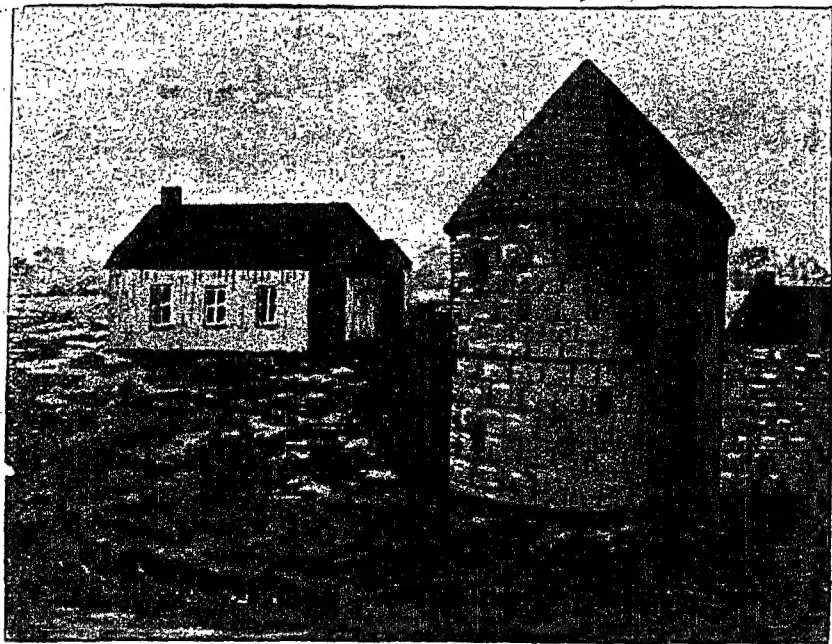
ated in the names of a number of the streets of the city. Sheriff Ross died in 1856.

ANDREW McDERMOTT.

Trader and Capitalist.

Among the notable business men of Red River, stood easily first Andrew McDermott. His stout and solid form indicated a man of affairs, and all old party the greater number were from residents knew old Mr. McDermott. He was in the first ship that Lord Selkirk sent out to Hudson Bay to begin his colony on Red River. In that first

After leaving the Hudson's Bay service he became a dealer in all kinds of wares. He could outfit a party for the plains or supply the farmer with implements. His store was aptly compared to Noah's Ark. He grew to be a man of much wealth. When the first Canadian Pacific railway scheme was formed he was the director for Manitoba. Many a settler in Manitoba was indebted to him for getting a start in life. Mr. McDermott married a daughter of Trader McNabb. His large family connected with the natives of the country, married notable and prominent persons of the



OLD COURT HOUSE, WITH S. W. BASTION OF FORT GARRY

the Highlands, but the vessel called at Sligo in Ireland, where it took a dozen or so of Irish emigrants. Among them was Andrew McDermott. Coming thus early he took a firm hold upon the soil of Red River. If the old Red River proverb be true that any one who once tastes the water of Red River, will always return to it, it is certainly true that many of the earliest settlers adhered most tenaciously to it through good and evil report, and found it to be to them a favorable home. Whatever party or faction was in power, Mr. McDermott was on good terms with them.

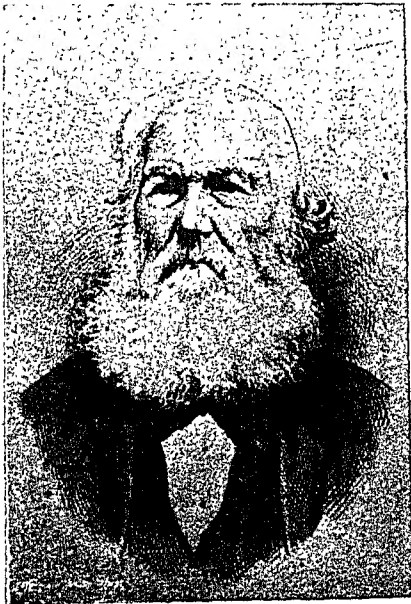
Most distinguished among his sons-in-laws were the late Mr. Bannatyne, one of the kindest hearted and truest men that the Red River and Manitoba have known; and the late Governor William McTavish. Mr. McDermott passed away on October 12th 1881, at the ripe age of ninety-three years, sixty-nine of which had been spent on Red River.

DONALD GUNN,

Schoolmaster and Naturalist.

To a visitor to Red River in the old times probably no resident in the settlement was a more interesting com-

panion than Donald Gunn, of Little Britain. He was a perfect treasury of knowledge as to the history, topography and natural history of the country. He was born in the parish of Halkirk, in Caithnessshire, Scotland, in 1797. At the age of sixteen, being



DONALD GUNN

of adventurous disposition, he engaged to go to Hudson Bay in the service of the great fur company. Six years after his arrival on the Bay the young Highlander was married to Margaret Swain, daughter of the officer in charge of York district, a lady on her mother's side related to the natives of

the country. After the union of the fur companies in 1821, Gunn and his wife joined the Selkirk colony and settled near Lower Fort Garry. Some years after the young settler became master of the parish school, which position he held for eighteen years. Donald Gunn was a great reader, and it was fitting that he should be appointed librarian of a part of the Red River library, which was kept in his house. Mr. Gunn also took part in public affairs, and was one of the leading men by petition and otherwise in having the country opened up for settlement. The Little Britain school master took careful observation in meteorology, and was in constant communication with the Smithsonian Institution. His collection of eggs and skins of our northern birds was valuable. Donald Gunn was the founder of the Presbyterian church of Little Britain, and was an elder in the same. After the creation of Manitoba Mr. Gunn was appointed a member of the legislation council, and on its abolition was made a stipendiary magistrate for the province. His useful life came to an end on St. Andrew's day, 1878, and his place as the Nestor of the settlement can never be filled again.

CONCLUSION.

These are but a few of the notables of the old Red River. On some other occasion it may be suitable to relate the deeds of more of them, especially of the faithful clergymen who, from Priest Provencher downward, laid good foundations in Red River. Now that very few of the original Red River settlers remain, it would be well for the Historical society to open a register to be a record of the date of birth, birthplace, work and date of death of the notable persons of old Red River.